Say 'NO' to Indoctrination

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Guest columnist

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Ohio Representative (District 88) and controversial legislator Gary Click is at it again. After coauthoring a terrible bill devoid of both knowledge and humanity (SAFE), the good pastor from Fremont Baptist Temple is now attempting to codify a law that would require all school districts in the State of Ohio to allow students off-campus time to take classes in religion. The law involves basically a one-word change: the state "should" allow to "must" allow. But what a difference one little word can make. This bill would destroy the "wall of separation" between church and state that Jefferson, Monroe, Adams and other Founding Fathers felt to be so critical to the success of our new nation.

The religion classes would be run and taught by an organization based in Hilliard, Ohio known as LifeWays. In just a few years, this group has spread its evangelical message throughout a number of states; Indiana just made the program compulsory for all school districts. In Ohio, the "educational" program would last from grades K-12 and would cover all the Bible. The curriculum is based on The Good Project, a Bible-study program produced by Lifeway Christian Resources, a Christian media publishing and distribution division of the Southern Baptist Church.

How interesting: an SBC program; Rep. Click, a Baptist pastor. Note a connection? According to the LifeWays Website, "LifeWays maintains a high view of the authority of scriptures and we believe the story-line of Scripture that climaxes in the central gospel message." The Southern Baptist Church has long been a leader for conservative politics and is viewed as a core part of the born-again White evangelical voting bloc. There is a very strong tie between the modern Evangelical movement and the Christian Nationalist movement. Is this the type of curriculum we want our children exposed to for 12 years?

negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic. Why take our kids away from the classroom to become indoctrinated? LifeWays (and Rep. Click) states that our students will only be taken out of "*unimportant"* (my word and italics) such as classes in art and music. I'm sorry, but music and art are much more important than a prejudicial Bible class that students can obtain by attending Sunday School. The creative arts are essential to the fullest development of all our students. Having students leave their schools during the class day will impact our learning institutions in a number of ways by altering the educational goals. Clearly, such a program will have a negative effect on students who are of different religions by creating two groups, one of which leaves the campus and the other which must stay behind (and in some verified cases, be given extra schoolwork). This can lead to shaming, bullying and an increase in student anxiety.

An outstanding local schoolteacher pointed out that music, art et al are taught at very different times of the day; students would be running in and out at all times making it virtually impossible to keep track of their comings and goings. This would increase the likelihood of students cutting classes on their own or being lured off campus by potential criminal sources.

LifeWays has stated as one of their goals the "conversion of students." Sorry, brainwashing is unacceptable as a part of the educational process. The program is also anti-LGBTQ and

religions or non-religions have a First Amendment right to be free from religious indoctrination. Even though our current Supreme Court is muddying that issue in typical right-wing fashion, we must adhere to the Founding Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson who stated, "There must be a wall of separation between the state and religion." It was true at the beginning and is even truer today. When any Government allows the takeover of the religious teaching of a nation's school system, that Government has become a dictatorship or a weak pawn to theocracy.

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